最難関私立大 英語 ＜読解編＞

目　次

第１講　最難関私大英語　長文演習①　p4
第２講　最難関私大英語　長文演習②　p12

はじめに

この講座は，いよいよ迫る本番の入試に備えて，実践力をつけていくための内容となっています。本番を想定して，**30 分と時間を決めて，問題を解いてみてください。** 入試本番同様に，限られた時間で最大限の点数を目指す訓練です。

講座のレベルとしては，私大最高峰の**早稲田と慶応の過去問**を中心に，テキストを作成しています。

次に，**1 時間と決めて，予習にしっかりと取り組んでみてください。** わからない単語を辞書で調べて意味を書き込む。カッコやスラッシュを使って，文構造を意識して，一文一文の意味を考えてきてください。

授業を終えたのちに，**長文は必ず音読を十回やってもらいます。** 例年第一志望に合格した生徒たちが口をそろえて言います。授業後の音読十回のおかげで，本当に英語長文がすらすら読めるようになりましたと。それから，本テキストにある全ての単語を必ず覚えることもとても大切な復習となります。

地道な作業の積み重ねこそが，大事を成す唯一の手段であること。そして，授業を聞くだけの受動的な姿勢から，**予習，復習を自らする能動的な姿勢こそが，大事を成す基本**であることをお忘れなく。

肘井　学

第１講　最難関私大英語　長文演習①

ポイント

【1】譲歩の発見
【2】逆接の発見
【3】筆者の主張の発見

次の英文を読んで，下記の設問に答えよ。

The promise of speed reading — to absorb text several times faster than normal, without any significant loss of comprehension — can indeed seem (イ) <u>too good to be true</u>. Nonetheless, it has long been an aspiration for many readers, as well as the (ロ) <u>entrepreneurs</u> seeking to serve them. And as the production rate for new reading matter has increased, and people read on a growing array of devices, the lure of speed reading has only grown stronger.

The first popular speed-reading course was based on the idea that reading was slow because it was (　A　). The course focused on teaching people to make fewer back-and-forth eye movements across the page, taking in more information with each glance. Unfortunately, the scientific consensus suggests that such enterprises should be (ハ) <u>viewed with suspicion</u>. In a recent study, we reviewed past research on reading and concluded that it’s extremely unlikely you can greatly improve your reading speed without missing out on a lot of meaning.

NOTE

Certainly, readers are capable of rapidly scanning a text to find a specific word or piece of information, or to pick up a general idea of what the text is about. But this is skimming, not reading. We can definitely skim, and it may be that speed-reading systems help people skim better. Some speed-reading systems, (　B　), instruct people to focus on the beginnings of paragraphs and chapters. This is probably a good skimming strategy.

But speed reading? Techniques that aim to guide eye movements so that we can take in more information from each glance seem doomed to fail. There is only a small area in the *retina for which our visual *acuity is very high. Our eyes are seriously limited in their precision outside of that. This means that we can take in only a word or so at a glance, as well as a little bit about the words on either side.

A deeper problem, however, is that the big (ニ) bottleneck in reading isn't perception (seeing the words) but language processing (assembling strings of words into meanings). Have you ever tried listening to an audio recording with the speaking rate dialed way up? Doubling the speed, in our experience, leaves individual words perfectly identifiable — but makes it just about impossible to follow the meaning. The same phenomenon occurs with written text.

NOTE

As in all forms of human behavior, there is a trade-off, in reading, (　C　) speed and accuracy. You can learn to skim strategically so that you spend more time looking where the more important words are likely to be, and if the words are presented in a stream you may be able to learn which words to focus on and which to ignore. However, that does not mean that you can somehow magically read parts of a page that you don't look at, or process all the words in a superfast sequence. Reading is about language (　D　), not visual ability. If you want to improve your reading speed, your best (ホ) <u>bet</u> — as old-fashioned as it sounds — is to read a variety of written material and expand your vocabulary.

*retina 網膜　　　　　　*acuity 鋭さ

[Sorry, You Can’t Speed Read by Jeffrey M. Zacks and Rebecca Treiman, The New York Times, April 15, 2016 © 2023 New York Times]

NOTE

設問 1. 下線部(イ)～(ホ)の意味に最も近いものを(a)～(d)からそれぞれ一つ選べ。

(イ) (a) convincing (b) truthful (c) unbelievable (d) undeniable

(ロ) (a) people who devise methods of speed reading

(b) people who found innovative companies

(c) people who lend money to speed readers

(d) people who solve the mysteries of speed reading

(ハ) (a) approached skeptically (b) investigated discreetly

(c) rejected instantly (d) studied precisely

(ニ) (a) key (b) misunderstanding (c) obstacle (d) secret

(ホ) (a) choice (b) opinion (c) prediction (d) proof

設問 2. 空所(A)～(D)を埋めるのにもっとも適当なものを(a)～(d)からそれぞれ一つ選べ。

(A) (a) demanding (b) difficult (c) exhausting (d) inefficient

(B) (a) eventually (b) for example (c) however (d) inconsequence

(C) (a) around (b) between (c) beyond (d) with

(D) (a) acquisition (b) analysis (c) comprehension (d) learning

設問 3. 次の 1. ～ 5. について，本文の内容に合うものは T を，合わないものは F を書け。

1. Speed reading means a very fast reading of texts in which an approximate understanding is achieved.
2. The necessity of speed reading has become greater because publishing companies have grown bigger and more diversified.
3. Past research on reading suggests that trying to read fast without failing to grasp essential meanings does not produce significant results.
4. The structure of an eye makes it relatively easy to take in a sequence of words if we are absorbed in them.
5. In order to read a text fast and understand it, we have to adopt conventional practices of reading a lot and building a richer vocabulary.

第２講 最難関私大英語 長文演習②

ポイント

【1】具体例の発見
【2】対比の発見
【3】主張の発見

次の英文を読んで，下記の設問に答えよ。

Twenty three years ago, my wife and I were having an argument about how to celebrate our first anniversary. Money was tight, and we had to choose between taking a beach vacation or buying a couch, which we did not have. Being Spanish, she cheerfully supported the beach. As a thrifty American, I argued for the couch because it was permanent. In the end, we compromised — we went to the beach.

Vacations say a lot about people. For one thing, where people choose to go indicates how much they like to be around others. In an article published in the *Journal of Research in Personality*, psychologists used college students about their geographical preferences and found that shy and inward-looking people (“introverts”) preferred the mountains, while outgoing and sociable people (“extroverts”) preferred the ocean. The researchers found more evidence for this when they looked at who lived where: Residents of especially mountainous areas were, on average, more introverted than those who lived in flatter places. The finding is fairly intuitive. In the mountains one easily finds separation and isolation. Meanwhile, beaches tend to be crowded places full of half-dressed strangers, a potentially unappealing scene for introverts, but exactly the point for extroverts.

NOTE

There's a surprising amount of research on vacations and what aspects are satisfying. To begin with, vacation planning tends to bring happiness. Data show that people actually derive most happiness from a vacation in the planning phase. On its own, this finding would seem to recommend the creation of a complex schedule, rather than a spontaneous getaway. But if complex trips bring joy in the planning, they risk giving almost no happiness in the taking. *Harvard Business Review* reports that people get little to no happiness boost from vacations they consider stressful. Crowded schedules and tight connections may look exciting in the process of planning, but they suggest you return no happier than when you left. Only people with simple, relaxed trips seem to get a happiness boost. Think of this as the Vacation Paradox: You have to choose between being happy beforehand or happy afterward. Sorry.

Whether people take a vacation at all says a bit about career success, but the relationship is opposite from what one might imagine. According to a study from the U.S. Travel Association, American workers in 2013 gave up 169 million days of paid time off, worth $52.4 billion. Was there a career benefit to giving up so much vacation time? There was not, according to the study. Those who left between 11 and 15 vacation days unused tended to receive smaller raises or bonuses than those who used all their vacation days. We don't know if this is because the vacation-less employees were overstressed, or because incompetent employees who couldn't get their work done skipped vacation. But the finding does indicate that vacation takers are not paying a career penalty.

NOTE

Vacations also say a thing or two about one’s country of origin. In America, the opening conversation topic with a stranger is frequently, “What do you do for a living?” For Europeans, the customary topic is “Where are you going on vacation this year?” Everyone has an answer, usually involving weeks and weeks at the beach or the mountains. The data provide support for the saying that Americans live to work, while Europeans work to live. The average American worker is offered just 16 days of paid holiday each year and has no legal guarantee to any time off. Compare this to Italy (31 days), Spain (34 days) and Portugal (35 days).

You might be skeptical about these statistics, noting, for instance, Spain’s 23 percent unemployment rate. But having lived in Spain for years, I can assure you that calling attention to the relationship between voluntary and involuntary idleness, namely unemployment, elicits reactions that run from confusion to dismissal. So just keep it to yourself, and get back to work.

Finally, for kids, summer vacation has a surprising effect on school performance. In 1996, researchers found that the average student loses a month of academic progress during summer vacation, with the biggest impact on poor kids, who lost significantly more reading ability than those from middle-income families. Obviously there are other goals for the summer, but you have to ask whether our century-old summer vacation system is really serving students as well as it could.

So what does your vacation say about you? Personally, I’ve made my peace with vacations, so we’re going away this year — but we’re not taking a Spanish month; just a modest American 10 days. Lacking a consensus on whether we like people or not, we will go to both the mountains and the beach. And

when we return, the kids — slightly less literate — will park themselves on the couch we finally bought.

[What Your Vacation Says About You by Arthur C. Brooks, The New York Times, August 18, 2015 © 2023 New York Times]

NOTE

In the context of the passage, choose the best answer for each question.

（1）What does the phrase “Money was tight” mean? The answer is: [（1）].

1 The small apartment where they lived didn’t have a lot of rooms for guests

2 The newly married couple had limited financial resources available

3 The couch that the author and his wife wanted was a permanent purchase

4 The husband and wife disagreed about what to do for their anniversary

（2）What compromise was reached for the author's vacation twenty three years ago? The answer is: [（2）].

1 It was hard for the wife to understand the American way of thinking

2 The wife, who was Spanish, resisted the idea of going to the beach

3 The author, who was thrifty, decided to buy furniture instead

4 In fact, there was no compromise; the author simply gave in

（3）Who does research suggest will be “extroverts”? The answer is: [（3）].

1 College students who find being with half-dressed strangers unappealing

2 Residents who are inclined to live in geographically isolated areas

3 People who tend to live in flat and crowded areas, such as near the beach

4 Those who live in the mountains or like to take vacations there

(4) What does research say about vacation satisfaction? The answer is: [(4)].

1 Planning a trip is often more enjoyable than doing the actual travelling

2 Few vacations actually look more exciting in planning than in reality

3 Paradoxically, taking a vacation makes people more stressed at work

4 A more complex schedule increases the enjoyment of a vacation

(5) What is the relationship between vacations and career success in the U.S.? The answer is: [(5)].

1 Taking more vacation time is not associated with receiving a lower salary

2 Giving up vacation time generally results in more chances for promotion

3 People who take all their given vacation time feel higher levels of stress

4 Many employees are behind in their work because they took a vacation

(6) What does the author say about Spanish unemployment? The answer is: [(6)].

1 Disinterest and unwillingness to work hard are especially widespread in Spain

2 Americans cannot believe the Spanish have no legal rights to take vacation

3 It is ironic that Spanish vacations are so long with so many people out of work

4 Many Spanish people are confused and dismayed by the high unemployment

(7) What effect do vacations have on children's education? The answer is: [(7)].

1 Long summer vacations give a significant advantage to lower-income families

2 Time off during the summer improves student performance in the classroom

3 Students who take long vacations feel bad about missing too many classes

4 A month away from school tends to produce lower scores on reading tests

(8) The author’s personal conclusion concerning vacations is that [(8)].

1 the new couch he bought is the primary source of peace within the family

2 he is not sure whether his family falls into the extrovert or introvert category

3 as an American, he wants to plan an exciting, tightly organized vacation

4 he absolutely agrees with his wife's attitude toward extended vacations

NOTE

テキスト解答

第１講 最難関私大英語 長文演習① 解答

＜解答＞

設問 1. （イ）（c） （ロ）（b） （ハ）（a） （ニ）（c） （ホ）（a）

設問 2. （A）（d） （B）（b） （C）（b） （D）（c）

設問 3. 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. F 5. T

＜全訳＞

速読によって期待できるのは，理解を大きく損なうことなく標準より数倍速く文章を理解できることだが，実のところ話がうますぎて信用できない。とはいえ，速読はずっと，読者の役に立てようとする起業家や，多くの読者が熱望するものであった。そうして，新しい読み物の生産率が上がり，また人々が発達し続ける数々の手段で読むにつれて，速読の魅力は強くなっていったにすぎない。

最初に人気の出た速読の手順は，読むのが遅いのは，効率が悪いからだという考えに基づいていた。その手順では，人々にページ内において，より少ない往復で目を動かし，一目でより多くの情報を理解する方法を伝授することに焦点を当てていた。残念ながら，科学の一致した見解では，そのような考えは疑ってみるべきだと示している。最近の研究では，私たちは過去の読書に関する研究を見直して，多くの意味をとらえずに，読書スピードを大きく上げられるのはかなりありえないことだと結論を下した。

確かに，読者は文章をさっと読んで特定の言葉や断片的な情報を見つけたり，文章の概要を理解したりすることはできる。しかし，これはスキミングであって読書ではない。確かに私たちはスキミングをすることは可能で，速読法がより上手にスキミングをするのに役立っているのかもしれない。例えば，速読法の中には，段落や章の始まりを集中的に読むように指示するものもある。これは上手なスキミングの方法であろう。

しかし，速読についてはどうか？ 一目見てより多くの情報を理解できるように目の動きに関しての指示をねらいとした技術は，失敗の運命をたどるように思える。網膜の中には，私たちの視覚の鋭さを非常に高くしているごく狭い領域がある。その周辺では，私たちの目は精度の点で著しく制限される。これは，私たちは目を左右に動

かして見る言葉に関してはわずかしか理解できないのはもちろん，一目では一語程度しか理解できないことを意味する。

しかしながら, もっと深い問題は, 読むことの大きな障害が, 知覚（言葉を見ること）ではなくて，言語の処理（一連の言葉から意味を構築すること）にあることだ。あなたは今までに，話すスピードをうんと速く調整して，録音されたものを聞こうとしたことがあるか。私たちの経験では，速度を二倍にすると，一つひとつの言葉はまだ完全に認識できるが，意味を追うのはほぼ不可能になる。同じ現象が，文章でも起こるのだ。

人間のあらゆる行動様式と同様に，読書の中にも，スピードと正確さの間には両立しない関係性がある。戦略的なスキミングができるようになると，より重要な言葉がありそうな場所を見るのにかける時間は増える。また，もし，その言葉が次々に現れるなら，どの言葉に焦点を当てて，どれを無視するべきかを身につけられるかもしれない。しかし，そのことは見ていないページ部分をどういうわけか魔法のように読むことができるとか，超高速に連続で全ての言葉を処理できることを意味しているわけではない。読むことは，見る能力ではなくて，言葉を理解することに関係するものだ。もし読むスピードを上げたいのなら，一番の策は，古めかしく聞こえるが，様々な題材を読んで，語彙を広げていくことだ。

第１講 重要語彙リスト ＊一つ一つ何度も繰り返して，覚えてください

1	absorb	吸収する，（知識などを）取り入れる
2	significant	重要な
3	comprehension	理解
4	nonetheless	それにもかかわらず
5	aspiration	熱望
6	entrepreneur	起業家
7	serve	尽くす，役立つ
8	reading matter	読み物
9	an array of ~	数々の
10	device	手段
11	lure	魅力
12	back-and-forth	往復の
13	take in	取り込む，理解する
14	glance	ちらりと見ること
15	unfortunately	残念ながら
16	consensus	一致した見解
17	enterprise	企て
18	suspicion	疑い
19	conclude	結論を下す
20	extremely	きわめて
21	unlikely	ありそうにない
22	miss out on	～を見落とす
23	scan	拾い読みする
24	specific	特定の
25	definitely	確かに
26	instruct O to do	O に～するように教える
27	paragraph	段落
28	strategy	戦略
29	aim to do	～することをねらいとする
30	be doomed to do	～する運命にある
31	precision	正確さ
32	bottleneck	障害
33	perception	知覚
34	assemble O_1 into O_2	O_1 から O_2 を組み立てる
35	string	一連
36	dial up	上げる
37	identifiable	確認できる
38	phenomenon	現象
39	trade-off	両立しない関係にあること
40	sequence	連続

第１講 音読用白文 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

The promise of speed reading — to absorb text several times faster than normal, without any significant loss of comprehension — can indeed seem too good to be true. Nonetheless, it has long been an aspiration for many readers, as well as the entrepreneurs seeking to serve them. And as the production rate for new reading matter has increased, and people read on a growing array of devices, the lure of speed reading has only grown stronger.

The first popular speed-reading course was based on the idea that reading was slow because it was inefficient. The course focused on teaching people to make fewer back-and-forth eye movements across the page, taking in more information with each glance. Unfortunately, the scientific consensus suggests that such enterprises should be viewed with suspicion. In a recent study, we reviewed past research on reading and concluded that it's extremely unlikely you can greatly improve your reading speed without missing out on a lot of meaning.

Certainly, readers are capable of rapidly scanning a text to find a specific word or piece of information, or to pick up a general idea of what the text is about. But this is skimming, not reading. We can definitely skim, and it may be that speed-reading systems help people skim better. Some speed-reading systems, for example, instruct people to focus on the beginnings of paragraphs and chapters. This is probably a good skimming strategy.

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A deeper problem, however, is that the big bottleneck in reading isn't perception (seeing the words) but language processing (assembling strings of words into meanings). Have you ever tried listening to an audio recording with the speaking rate dialed way up? Doubling the speed, in our experience, leaves individual words perfectly identifiable — but makes it

just about impossible to follow the meaning. The same phenomenon occurs with written text.

As in all forms of human behavior, there is a trade-off, in reading, between speed and accuracy. You can learn to skim strategically so that you spend more time looking where the more important words are likely to be, and if the words are presented in a stream you may be able to learn which words to focus on and which to ignore. However, that does not mean that you can somehow magically read parts of a page that you don’t look at, or process all the words in a superfast sequence. Reading is about language comprehension, not visual ability. If you want to improve your reading speed, your best bet — as old-fashioned as it sounds — is to read a variety of written material and expand your vocabulary.

第２講 最難関私大英語 長文演習② 解答

＜解答＞

(1) 2	(2) 4	(3) 3	(4) 1
(5) 1	(6) 3	(7) 4	(8) 2

＜全訳＞

23 年前，妻と私は最初の結婚記念日を祝う方法でもめていた。家計は厳しかったので，ビーチで休暇を過ごすか，持っていなかったソファを買うかの選択をしなければならなかった。妻はスペイン人だったので，ビーチの方を好んで選択した。私は倹約的なアメリカ人だったので，これからも使えるソファを希望した。最終的に私たちは妥協してビーチへ行くことになった。

休暇は人間をよく表している。一つ例を挙げると，人の選ぶ行き先によって，その人がどれほど他人と一緒にいるのが好きかがわかる。『ジャーナル・オブ・リサーチ・イン・パーソナリティー』誌で掲載された記事によると，心理学者は地理的な好みについて大学生を利用して，恥ずかしがり屋で内向的な人（introvert という）が山を好み，一方で外向的で社交的な人（extrovert という）が海を好むとわかった。研究者は，このことに関するさらなる証拠を，どこに誰が住んでいるかを調べたときに発見した。平均して，特に山間地域に住む人は，より平坦な地域に住む人より内向的だった。その発見はかなり直感的なものだ。山の中では距離や孤立が生まれやすい。一方で，ビーチは半裸の見知らぬ人でいっぱいで，混雑した場所になる傾向にあるので，内向的な人にはあまり魅力的ではない光景になる可能性があるが，外向的な人にはまさしく求めていた場所になる傾向がある。

休暇や，どんな点で満足が行くかに関する驚くほどの研究がある。まずはじめに，休暇の計画を立てることは，幸せをもたらす傾向にある。統計によると，人は実際には計画段階で休暇から最も多くの幸せを感じている。それ自体で，この発見は，行き当たりばったりの休暇よりむしろ込み入った予定を作ることをすすめているように思えるだろう。しかし，もし込み入った旅が計画中に喜びをもたらすなら，旅行中にはほぼ何の幸福感ももたらさないリスクがある。『ハーバード・ビジネス・レビュー』によると，人はストレスに感じる休暇からは，ほぼあるいは全く幸福感を増さないということだ。過密な計画や余裕のない乗り換えは，計画の最中にはわくわくするように思えるかもしれないが，出発した時に比べて少しも幸福感を得られずに戻ってくる

ようだ。単純でくつろいだ旅行だけが，幸福感を増すように思える。これを休暇の逆説とみなそう。事前に幸福になるか，あとで幸せになるかの選択をしなければならない。残念なことなのだが。

人がしっかりと休みを取るかどうかが仕事上の成功をはっきり示しているわけではないが，その関係は想像とは逆の内容になる。全米旅行協会の調査によると，2013年にアメリカの労働者は，52.4億ドルに値する1億6900万日の有給休暇を無駄にした。それほど多くの休暇を無駄にすることに仕事上のメリットはあったのか。その研究によると，なかったようだ。11～15日の休暇を使用しないで放置した人は，全ての休暇を使用した人より昇給やボーナスが少ない傾向にあった。この理由が，休暇の少ない社員はストレスが多いからなのか，あるいは仕事を終えられなかった能力のない社員が休暇を取らなかったからなのかはわからない。しかし，その発見によって，休暇を取った人は仕事上の代償を払っていないということが実際にわかっている。

休暇によって，その人の生まれた場所についてもいくつかわかることがある。アメリカでは，見知らぬ人との最初の会話はたいてい「何の仕事をしているのですか？」である。ヨーロッパの人にとってのお決まりの話題は，「今年の休暇はどこに行く予定ですか？」である。誰もがたいてい，数週間ビーチや山に行くと答える。その統計によると，アメリカ人は仕事のために生きるが，ヨーロッパ人は生きるために仕事をするという言い伝えは支持できる。平均的なアメリカの労働者は，毎年たった16日しか有給休暇を与えられないし，いかなる休みに対しても法律で保障されていない。これをイタリアの31日やスペインの34日，ポルトガルの35日と比べてみよう。

例えばスペインの23%の失業率を引き合いに，この統計に懐疑的になるかもしれない。しかし，スペインに長年住んでみて確信をもって言えるのは，自発的に働かないことと，働かないことを強要されること，すなわち失業との関係に注意すると，混乱や受け入れられないといった反応があることだ。だから，そのことを自分の胸の内に秘めて仕事に戻ってほしい。

最後に，夏休みは，子供たちの学業に驚きの影響がある。1996年に，研究者は平均的な学生が夏休みに一か月分の学業成果を失うことを発見した。特にそれは貧しい子供たちに最も強い影響を与えており，彼らは中流階級の子供よりも著しく読む力を失っていた。確かに，夏には他の目標はあるが，1世紀の歴史がある夏休みの制度が本当に生徒のためになっているかどうか，またそうなっていたかを尋ねる必要がある。

さて，あなたがとる休暇はあなたについてどんなことを表しているだろうか。個人的には，いつも休みは取ってきたので，今年も出かけるが，スペイン人のように一か月の休みを取る予定ではない。つつましいアメリカ人のように10日程度だ。人ごみ

が好きかどうかについては意見が合わないが，山にも海にも行くだろう。そして帰ってきたとき，子供たちはわずかながら学力が下がり，私たちがとうとう購入したソファに座っているだろう。

第２講　重要語彙リスト　　＊一つ一つ何度も繰り返して，覚えてください

1	argument	議論
2	tight	きつい
3	couch	ソファ
4	cheerfully	陽気に，進んで
5	thrifty	質素な
6	permanent	永久の
7	compromise	妥協する
8	geographical	地理学上の
9	introvert	内向的な人
10	extrovert	外向的な人
11	resident	居住者
12	fairly	かなり
13	intuitive	直感的な
14	separation	分離
15	isolation	孤立
16	meanwhile	一方で
17	crowded	混雑した
18	derive A from B	B から A を引き出す
19	spontaneous	計画性のない
20	getaway	休暇
21	give a boost	促進する，増す
22	paradox	逆説
23	opposite	反対の
24	time off	休み
25	incompetent	能力のない
26	penalty	代償
27	customary	習慣的な
28	involve	含む
29	guarantee	保証，保障
30	compare A to B	A を B と比べる
31	skeptical	懐疑的な
32	statistics	統計
33	unemployment rate	失業率
34	assure	保証する
35	voluntary	自発的な
36	namely	すなわち
37	elicit	引き出す
38	dismissal	放棄，拒絶
39	school performance	学業
40	significantly	著しく

第２講 音読用白文 ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Twenty three years ago, my wife and I were having an argument about how to celebrate our first anniversary. Money was tight, and we had to choose between taking a beach vacation or buying a couch, which we did not have. Being Spanish, she cheerfully supported the beach. As a thrifty American, I argued for the couch because it was permanent. In the end, we compromised — we went to the beach.

Vacations say a lot about people. For one thing, where people choose to go indicates how much they like to be around others. In an article published in the *Journal of Research in Personality*, psychologists used college students about their geographical preferences and found that shy and inward-looking people (“introverts”) preferred the mountains, while outgoing and sociable people (“extroverts”) preferred the ocean. The researchers found more evidence for this when they looked at who lived where: Residents of especially mountainous areas were, on average, more introverted than those who lived in flatter places. The finding is fairly intuitive. In the mountains one easily finds separation and isolation. Meanwhile, beaches tend to be crowded places full of half-dressed strangers, a potentially unappealing scene for introverts, but exactly the point for extroverts.

There’s a surprising amount of research on vacations and what aspects are satisfying. To begin with, vacation planning tends to bring happiness. Data show that people actually derive most happiness from a vacation in the planning phase. On its own, this finding would seem to recommend the creation of a complex schedule, rather than a spontaneous getaway. But if complex trips bring joy in the planning, they risk giving almost no happiness in the taking. *Harvard Business Review* reports that people get little to no happiness boost from vacations they consider stressful. Crowded schedules and tight connections may look exciting in the process of planning, but they suggest you return no happier than when you left. Only people with simple, relaxed trips seem to get a happiness boost. Think of this as the Vacation Paradox: You have to choose between being happy beforehand or happy afterward. Sorry.

Whether people take a vacation at all says a bit about career success, but the relationship is opposite from what one might imagine. According to a study from the U.S. Travel Association, American workers in 2013 gave up 169 million days of paid time off, worth $52.4 billion. Was there a career benefit to giving up so much vacation time? There was not, according to the study. Those who left between 11 and 15 vacation days unused tended to receive smaller raises or bonuses than those who used all their vacation days. We don’t know if this is because the vacation-less employees were overstressed, or because incompetent employees who couldn’t get their work done skipped vacation. But the finding does indicate that vacation takers are not paying a career penalty.

Vacations also say a thing or two about one’s country of origin. In America, the opening conversation topic with a stranger is frequently, “What do you do for a living?” For Europeans, the customary topic is “Where are you going on vacation this year?” Everyone has an answer, usually involving weeks and weeks at the beach or the mountains. The data provide support for the saying that Americans live to work, while Europeans work to live. The average American worker is offered just 16 days of paid holiday each year and has no legal guarantee to any time off. Compare this to Italy (31 days), Spain (34 days) and Portugal (35 days).

You might be skeptical about these statistics, noting, for instance, Spain’s 23 percent unemployment rate. But having lived in Spain for years, I can assure you that calling attention to the relationship between voluntary and involuntary idleness, namely unemployment, elicits reactions that run from confusion to dismissal. So just keep it to yourself, and get back to work.

Finally, for kids, summer vacation has a surprising effect on school performance. In 1996, researchers found that the average student loses a month of academic progress during summer vacation, with the biggest impact on poor kids, who lost significantly more reading ability than those from middle-income families. Obviously there are other goals for the summer, but you have to ask whether our century-old summer vacation system is really serving students as well as it could.

So what does your vacation say about you? Personally, I’ve made my

peace with vacations, so we’re going away this year — but we’re not taking a Spanish month; just a modest American 10 days. Lacking a consensus on whether we like people or not, we will go to both the mountains and the beach. And when we return, the kids — slightly less literate — will park themselves on the couch we finally bought.

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